

An Analysis of English Proficiency of the Students of Universitas Riau – Indonesia

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Abstract

The objectives of this study are to: (1) acknowledge the students' English competence based on the taken majors and study programs, (2) determine the general English competence (TOEFL Equivalent). The target group of the study is all students who took English language at various faculties and at the same time also enrolled at TOEFL Equivalent at UPT Bahasa Universitas Riau (Language Center). The number of the population is 9.765 the students. Due to the homogenous characters of the population, 20% out of the population (1.953 students) were taken as sample of the research. TOEFL Equivalent compiled by the Language Center of Universitas Riau was used to collect the needed data. Descriptive statistics was operated to compute the data in order to get mean of the TOEFL Equivalent scores. Inferential statistics (Annova) was applied to differentiate the scores of TOEFL Equivalent obtained by various backgrounds of the students (gender, program taken at Universitas Riau, majors at senior high schools, region of their senior high schools, school status and ethnic groups). After analysing the data, it was found that female students' mean score is higher (405) than the male's (402); the mean TOEFL score of the study program taken at Universitas Riau in which the English Students is the highest (432) among a lot of study programs; the mean score of the students of Riau Province is higher (420) than the Riau Archipelago Province (401); the mean score of students of private schools is higher (405) than the state schools (404); the mean of TOEFL score of Language and Art is the highest (432) among three majors (natural science, social science and other science). The last is the Chinese / Tionghoa mean of TOEFL score is the highest (438) among existing ethnic groups. The findings suggest that the students of Universitas Riau should be aware of understanding parts of the TOEFL materials like listening, reading, and structure especially in the area of their difficulties.

Keywords: TOEFL Equivalent, and English Proficiency

INTRODUCTION

The need of English proficiency in higher education in Indonesia is high. This is due to English is one of the most frequently used in scientific discourse (spoken and written) and foreign companies in Indonesia, including in Riau Province. In line with it, the students of higher education e.g. the students of Universitas Riau should be aware of this particular need. To support them, Universitas Riau offers two types of English instruction; English Subject which is a compulsory subject for all students in all faculties in Universitas Riau and General English competence as the so – called TOEFL Equivalent.

Taking the two types of English instructions, most of the students still face basic matters in mastering the materials given. This is caused by insufficient mastery of English language at senior high schools (English language materials) – integrated skills of English (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing), added by vocabulary item and structural elements.

Focusing to general English competence (TOEFL Equivalent) existing in the decree of Rector of Universitas Riau number 68/719/AK/2004, most of the students are still hard to master the high level of listening (mini-talk), reading comprehension (unfamiliar topic with low frequency use of vocabulary items) and structure (condensed word constructions and exception use of certain words). These phenomena are caused by insufficient number of training in school periods – three years at senior high school and lecture execution of Universitas Riau. In addition, most of them do not allocate their time outside lesson period to do language activities on their own like listening, reading, speaking, and writing in English.

Relating to the commencement of English proficiency test, there are several studies have been carried out in some countries where English is regarded as a foreign language (EFL). One of them is the study about finding in the relationship between the participants' test scores and their attitude toward different sections of the test in which the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was conducted. The obtained results showed that there was only a relationship between the candidates' overall attitude toward the test and their test score (Samineh Poorsoti and Hanieh Davatgari Asl, 2015).

A similar study is done by Zaidoon Abdul Razaq Abboud and Nagham Ja'far Hussein (2011). They found that there are two parts of difficulties; a theoretical part and a practical one. The theoretical part includes several sections with detailed explanations of the TOEFL test and its types, especially ITP TOEFL test program which is the main concern of the present study. Concerning the practical part, there is a concentration on the difficulties that the students face during the ITP TOEFL test. The study ends with conclusions and recommendations that can help the students face these difficulties and successfully pass the TOEFL test.

Gulden Akin (2016) who carries out the Student Selection and Placement Centre (OSYM) coordinates all of the national tests. Foreign Language Test (YDS) is one of the national tests which measure the foreign language proficiency level of candidates. The test is conducted for state employees who want to be appointed to a post abroad permanently or who want to raise their pay status, for master degree and PhD candidates, would-be associate professors and general practitioners who want to be specialists. Having an adult target group of candidates and academic

texts from various different fields are two significant characteristic features of YDS. This study aims to evaluate YDS in terms of a number of common characteristics of adult education and language for specific purposes. Analysis were conducted under the title of originality and authenticity of questions, candidates' information about the test and its process, fair distribution of questions between academic science fields. The findings of the study indicate that originality of questions and candidates' acknowledgement of test are bright sides of YDS whereas fair distribution of questions and inability of measuring four basic skills of a language are concluded as the adverse sides of the test.

Another study was conducted by Kaoru Mita, Mika Shirao, Steven Martin, Yuko Hatagaki and Gary Dendo (2014). They concluded that the Japanese students made presentations in front of the foreign guests using presentation software, and dealt with subsequent comments, questions, and discussion in English. A qualitative analysis of post-activity questionnaires revealed that the program had a positive effect on motivation and performance. Results provide key implications toward developing a Communicative Language Teaching curriculum that addresses the needs of Japanese EFL students.

Besides, Sripatham Noom-ura (2013) also carried a study which focus on English language teaching. The study surveys problems with English language teaching and learning and the professional development (PD) needs of high-school teachers in three provinces of three Secondary Educational Service Areas in Thailand. Both closed-and open-ended questionnaires were employed. The data was analyzed by frequency distribution and percentage; the problems and PD needs are herein presented from highest to lowest ranking. The study's results may possibly be generalized so that local organizations and institutions of higher education can provide appropriate assistance and improve the English teaching situation in Thailand in general.

In short, it can be restated that an intensive study on English proficiency should be done in order to acknowledge the real difficulties faced by language learners. In addition, the study also sticks to how the language learners organize their ways to cope their own learning problems.

METHOD(S)

Research Design

This research focuses on an analysis of English proficiency (TOEFL Equivalent) which related to six factors; gender, program taken at Universitas Riau, majors at senior high schools, region of their senior high schools, school status and ethnic groups. In otherwords, this study was executed to the students' English proficiency of Universitas Riau in the contexts of various related elements to the main variable. The aim of relating English proficiency to those factors is to ascertain the difference mean score between or among sub variables.

Setting and Participants

This study was carried out at Universitas Riau – Indonesia in 2016 (September to December). As mentioned earlier, there are two kinds of English subject offered at Universitas Riau; a. English language reflects the taken study programs in various faculties, and b. English competence contains standard basic skills for several purposes (TOEFL Preparation). The first one is weighed as big as two/four credits and the second one is instructed without credit. The target group of the study is all students who took the English Language at various faculties and also enrolled TOEFL Equivalent at the same time at UPT. Bahasa Universitas Riau. The number of the population is 9765 students. Due to the homogenous character of the population in term of their academic achievement, the sampling size is taken randomly (Cresswell: 2005) as big as 20% out of the populations, that is 1.953 students.

Data Collection Methods and Analysis

To collect the needed data (English Proficiency), TOEFL Equivalent scores complied by UPT. Bahasa (Language Center) of Universitas Riau was used. In terms of analysing data to determine the mean scores of TOEFL Equivalent, the descriptive is operated to compute the raw scores. To ascertain the different mean between and among six sub variables (gender, program taken at Universitas Riau, majors at senior high schools, region of their senior high schools, school status and ethnic groups), inferential statistics (Annova) was applied.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Research Findings

The research results are divided into six sections which relate to sub-variables (gender, program taken at Universitas Riau, majors at senior high schools, region of their senior high schools, school status and ethnic groups). The following table is about gender of the students in relation to TOEFL Equivalent score.

Table 1. TOEFL Score by Gender

No	Gender	Total of Students	Total of TOEFL Score	Mean Score
1	Male	782	314617	402
2	Female	1171	474741	405

The above table informs the score of TOEFL between male and female students. The mean score of female is 405, while the mean score of male students is 402. It means that the female students' mean score is higher than that of the male students.

The next sub-variable is the study program taken by the student at Universitas Riau.

Table 2. TOEFL Score by Study Program at Universitas Riau

No	Study Program	Total of Students	TOEFL Score	Mean Score
1	Business Administration	26	10758	398
2	State Administration	40	16366	399
3	Sociology	88	35413	393
4	Science Communications	45	18193	404
5	Tourism	30	12024	400
6	Management	82	35144	413
7	International Relationship	70	30135	418
8	Public Administration Science	49	20378	399
9	Accountancy	89	36595	406
10	Economic Development	67	27070	398
11	Technique of Electro	57	24066	407
12	Technique of Architecture	8	3676	408
13	Chemical Engineering	81	33997	409
14	Engineering Civil	108	44261	406
15	Environmental Technique	20	8794	399
16	Technical Engineering	66	26635	397
17	Technique of Information	15	6846	427
18	Agro technology	69	27362	402
19	Information System	33	13829	419

20	Mathematics	29	11737	419
21	Chemistry	28	11524	411
22	Physics	52	20947	402
23	Biology	34	14594	416
24	Statistics	32	13425	406
25	English Language	36	15554	432
26	Japanese Language	31	13271	402
27	Indonesian Language	25	10367	398
28	Mathematics Education	19	8315	415
29	Chemistry Education	25	10891	418
30	Physics Education	13	6718	419
31	Biology Education	17	8258	412
32	History Education	18	8354	397
33	Economics Education	18	8132	406
34	Civvies Education	25	9338	389
35	Kindergarten Education	35	17230	391
36	Elementary Education	38	16379	399
37	Training of Athletics Education	25	6704	372
38	Physical and Recreation Education	16	7244	381
39	Guidance and Concealing	13	6340	396
40	External Education	32	13429	383
41	Ph. D Program	76	33350	422
42	Law Science	100	41824	398
43	Territorial Water Resource Management.	23	10279	395

44	Conducting Territorial Water	20	7095	394
45	Nurse Education	98	43922	395
46	Management of Informatics	27	9946	397
47	Forestry	5	744	372

The above table presents the TOEFL score by study program taken by the students at Universitas Riau. Out of 47 study programs, the highest mean score of TOEFL is obtained by English Study Program (432). It is followed by Study Program of Technique of Informatics (427). The lowest one (372) is achieved by the study program of Educational Training of Athletics.

The following data are about the English competence of the students from two different provinces (Riau Province and Riau Archipelago Province).

Table 3. TOEFL Score by Provinces

No	Province	Total of Students	TOEFL Score	Mean Score
1	Riau	1067	133146,4	420
2	Riau Archipelago	886	269921	401

Table 3 shows that the different mean score of TOEFL between the students from Riau Province and Riau Archipelago Province. The mean score of the students from Riau Province is higher (420) than that of Riau Archipelago Province (402). The next table is about the students' TOEFL score from different status of schools.

Table 4. The TOEFL score by School Status (State and Private)

No	School	Total of Students	Toefl Score	Mean Score
1	State	1678	670748	404
2	Private	275	115210	405

The table above presents of means score of TOEFL between state and private schools. The means score of private schools is higher (405) than the mean score of the state schools (404). The data about the TOEFL score obtained by the students from different majors at senior high schools can be seen in the following table.

Table 5. TOEFL by Students' Majors in Senior High Schools

No	Majors	Total of Students	TOEFL Score	Mean Score
1	Natural Science	1178	428334	407
2	Social Science	384	100930	392
3	Language and Art	136	3896	432
4	Other	255	50208	395

The table above shows that the mean score of different majors taken at senior high schools. The students from language and art major achieved the highest mean score among the four majors (432). It is followed by the natural science (407), other (395), and social science (392). The last finding is about the TOEFL score obtained by various ethnic groups. The detail information can be seen in the following table.

Table 6. TOEFL Scores by Ethnic Groups

No	Ethnicities	Total of Students	TOEFL score	Mean Score
1	Batakness	420	169183	399
2	Betawiness	4	1706	426
3	Banjarness	23	9302	404
4	Bugis	9	3456	384
5	Chinese / Tionghoa	17	7452	438
6	Javanese	257	105761	402
7	Karoness	13	5263	404
8	Manadoness	3	1263	421
9	Malaya	474	192960	407
10	Minangness	733	295820	403

Based on the table above, the highest mean score is achieved by the Chinese / Tionghoa students (438) among 10 different ethnic groups at Universitas Riau. The lowest one is obtained by Bugis background students (384).

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Regarding the TOEFL score by gender, the mean score of female is 405, while the mean score TOEFL of male students is 402. It means that the female students' mean score is higher than that of the male students is. This can be understood that female students have better English proficiency compared to male students. The better performance of female students compared to male students is actually a common phenomenon in many classrooms. This is probably because female students are more diligent and work harder than male students.

Data related to the TOEFL score by study programs taken by the students at Universitas Riau indicate that English Study program students outperform other students in terms of their English proficiency. This result is not surprising as these English department students learn English everyday. They even should have performed better than their current mean scores. At the same time, more support needs to be provided for students from Educational Training of Athletics who appeared to be the group with the lowest score (372).

It can also be seen from the findings that the mean score of the students from Riau Province is higher than (420) that of Riau Archipelago Province (402). This indicates that English proficiency of students from Riau is slightly better than those who come from Riau Archipelago Province. This is also not a surprising result as Riau Archipelago Province is a relatively new province with limited English learning facilities.

Data regarding TOEFL scores comparing students from state and private high schools show that there is no significant difference between these two types of school graduates. The mean score of private school is 405 and the mean score of the state school is 404. This indicates that the quality of English instruction in both state and private schools is generally the same.

Another interesting finding is related to TOEFL score based on students' ethnicities. It is found that the highest mean score is achieved by the Chinese / Tionghoa students (438) among 10 different ethnic groups at Universitas Riau. This data clearly indicates that students with Chinese background generally have better English proficiency than other students from various ethnic groups. This data is actually confirmed with what is found in everyday English teaching practice in Riau where many Indonesian Chinese schools have better quality of English instruction. This is probably not only the case in Riau province, but also in many places in Indonesia.

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